

**Work Zone Safety Task Force (WZSTF) Meeting Minutes
Wenatchee Area 1 Maintenance Conference Room
June 21, 2006**

Introductions

Kevin Dayton highlighted some safety issues of the conference room and the building.

Don Senn welcomed the group and noted that Secretary Doug MacDonald has made safety WSDOT's number one focus. Secretary MacDonald believes that injuries are preventable and is outlining a new plan to target measures to accomplish safety at every level of the organization. The WZSTF serves an important role, keeping the work zone environment safer. Don pointed out that each individual needs to be cognizant of his or her surroundings, looking out for his or her self as well as fellow workers. Another key component is making work zones consistent across the state so the public knows what to expect.

Kevin introduced Mike Frucci of Eastern Region, Mike's focus is construction. Mike replaces Ralph Robertson, long time member of the task force.

Washington State Patrol (WSP)

WSP Lieutenant Mike Warren explained that the reason that WSP and WSDOT have such an excellent working relationship in North Central Region is because Don Senn is in constant communication with the WSP. Involving WSP early in projects ensures coordination from the beginning. North Central Region and the WSP have quarterly meetings to address maintenance and construction issues. Dealing with problems while they are still minor prevents them from becoming major issues.

There is an I-90 cable median barrier issue that is currently being addressed. When a semi recently went through the cable barrier (cable barrier are not designed to stop a semi), a Class C tow truck had to remove it. The tension on the cable is a concern in that it is under considerable pressure and should it snap or be cut it could cause injury or death. Lessons learned from this experience were passed on to the WSDOT Design Office to be shared with all the regions.

Phil Fordyce and Ken Smith expressed concern over the cable barrier tension issue. Dick Albin has asked for the regions, incident response crews and WSP to be trained in how to release a vehicle from the barrier. Kevin agrees that a bulletin needs to be distributed now by the Design Office that says when a vehicle is caught in the cable that the cable is not to be cut because the high tension barrier could be very dangerous if severed. This should be distributed to the WSP, the Washington State Fire Chief Association, the Tow Truck Operator's Association, Washington State Fire Commissioner, the Washington State Firefighter's Association, and the Washington State Council of Firefighters

Lieutenant Warren also talked about a section of SR 243 where there were a number of fatal collisions. Larger signs and rumble strips were installed, community meetings were held, enforcement was stepped up, and the collisions have been greatly reduced. This is one more example of WSP and WSDOT working together to improve safety.

Kevin asked what the WSP thinks of the double fines for speeding in work zones. Lieutenant Warren says they like them. A work zone is heavily patrolled the first few days, then things settle down and only spot checks are needed after that to keep speeding

from becoming an issue. The only way to make an impact on some people is for speeding to cost them money. Money from the tickets doesn't go to the WSP; they patrol for the safety of drivers and workers. Ted Trepanier asked if the WSP only doubles fines when the work zone is signed with a sign saying "Fines double in work zones." Lieutenant Warren says, that although the double fines are a state law, his troopers do not ticket unless the sign is present since the courts have voided tickets written without a sign in place, the argument being that not everyone knows the "Rules of the Road." Kevin says if this is the case, then all work zones need to display the double fine signs. Ted also believes that the signs are only effective if backed by law enforcement. Discussion ensued as to the effectiveness of a public information program informing people that double fines in work zones are the law whether a sign is present or not. **Kevin asked Ted to look into energizing this program. This will become Tracking Issue #05-07.**

Mike O'Neil asked if troopers could include on an incident report or speeding ticket whether or not proper signing was in place in a work zone. Lieutenant Warren said that his troopers include this type of detail and are encouraged to take pictures whenever they are warranted.

Region Round Table

Southwest Region – Chris Tams said that they have implemented a mandatory restriction that allows trucks to use the right lane only through an I-5 work zone involving a center island traffic split. This restriction will improve merging efficiency at a lane closure. Chris said on another project, SW Region has partnered with the county to maintain a county road as a detour for local traffic when SR 142 is closed, all other traffic will be rerouted to SR 14. Next year SR 97 will be totally closed to address load restriction issues. Chris believes total closure ensures the best quality project.

South Central Region – Tom Lenberg talked about taking first and third grade classes on a tour of the region complex and talking about work zones. The experience has been priceless, parents are being asked by their children to slow down in work zones. Rick Gifford said SC Region is working on an I-90 rock stabilization project. They plan on leaving four lanes open in a narrowed configuration; the lanes will be eleven foot with four foot shoulders. The annual Courage Classic bike event with up to 600 riders crossing the pass in August will be held while these construction restrictions are in place. The region is working with HQ traffic operations on the coordination of the event, it has yet been decided on how to best accommodate the bike riders through the work zone.

Olympic Region – Amy Revis said their construction season is just getting started. Steve Haapala talked about scheduling work zone reviews in order to catch and solve problems early. Steve said that stripe removal is still an issue, including what is the best method of removing the stripes, the best materials for both temporary and permanent striping, and striping for lane shifts during construction. Olympic Region gets fewer complaints when they use a solid line instead of skip stripes in the work zones.

Lakeside Industries – Mike O'Neil said that both the workers and unions have complained about the lack of consistency in standards that they are held to. Lakeside has very high traffic control standards, when Lakeside is subcontracting, sometimes the traffic control is almost non existent and they have to bring in their own for safety sake. Lakeside would like for WSDOT to hold contractors all to the same standard. Mike questions whether lump sum contracting is to blame in part, with some contractors cutting corners. Mike also had a report from a Lakeside crew who said that up to 17

WSDOT people were at a paving site doing training for material testing. Mike asked that Lakeside be notified when a group is going to show up so that arrangements can be made to keep people from being hurt. Kirk said that North Central Region policy is that everyone entering a work zone must check in with the project inspector so that the visitors know where to park, are informed of hazards particular to a site, and have the proper attire. Mike said that if a person is walking where they shouldn't be during a paving operation, the truck drivers have been instructed to have the person get into a truck cab so they can understand that a person walking across the work zone may not be seen by the drivers of work zone vehicles. Lakeside has a very active safety program, they coach and mentor instead of punish. Finally, Mike talked about striping concerns regarding temporary fog lines on rural roads after dark, and how this needs to be thought about in the planning stages.

North Central Region – Kirk Berg said that removal of both permanent and temporary striping is an issue since grinding is unsatisfactory. He also talked about getting contractors to work with WSDOT on safety assessments. North Central Region is looking at work zones that the WSP can patrol. Except for a few rear end collisions, things are going well this season. Kirk says that North Central Region has for the most part liked the change to lump sum projects and that most of their lump sum projects involve rural paving, but he sees fewer issues in work zones because the expectations are set high in the beginning.

Design Office – Ken Smith said that the updated chapter on work zone safety and mobility in the *Design Manual* will be out this week for statewide review. He urged that it be forwarded on to those who need to see it.

Wilder Construction – Kathleen St. John talked about a project on SR 9. Wilder Construction has not found lump sum to be an issue. Kathleen also expressed Wilder's goal to merge WSDOT's and Wilder's safety programs.

Eastern Region – Mike Frucci talked about the I-90 viaduct bridge deck repair project through Spokane and how well it has gone so far. WSDOT partnered with the WSP and the business owners in the very early planning stages of the project and it has proven to be very effective. WSDOT conducted a huge media blitz about the project and have an updated website for people to track the construction. Mike said they are using hydro blasting of pavement markings on this project and it's been very successful.

Northwest Region – Julia Mizuhata said she has discovered that implementation of appropriate traffic control with local agencies can be a problem. She talked about a closure on I-5 where the local agency did not coordinate the signing or the work very well. She went on to say that permanent stripe removal has been an issue on a SR 599 project. Bonnie Nau talked about a fatality on SR 522 within the limits of a work zone but the accident was not attributed to the work zone. There was no work being done at the time, signing and striping were in place. Phil Fordyce talked about two design build projects being done in Everett and Kirkland, also what to do when traffic control gets left out of a design/build contract and suggested improving the way the contracts are written to include the use of more standard specifications to reduce errors of omission. He also talked about a ribbon cutting event with Governor Gregoire at an intersection of I-5 and SR 18 and the difficulty in providing a safe area to accommodate this event. Phil talked about the issue of who has approval and control over a work zone in state routes passing through a city, apparently this issue is still being debated at the Attorney General's

Office. He also brought up the problem of how to protect workers at the end of the paving train, as well as testers at the end of the work zone. Phil says that specific steps to protect these employees need to be established. The group was reminded that a memo was sent out statewide in 2004 titled “Statewide Initiative on Worker Safety During Paving Operations” raising their awareness on this issue and providing some guidance on improving safety. Each region is encouraged to review and identify improvement opportunities within their regions to keep workers safe during paving operations

Kevin Dayton talked about a non-work zone fatality during the SR 516 widening project when a worker fell from a piece of equipment. Kevin says it is everyone’s job to look at safety, if someone is working in an unsafe manner, tell them. And if someone tells you that you are working in an unsafe manner, listen. Don Senn reminded everyone that Secretary MacDonald is very serious about safety and that with the new emphasis, WSDOT employees could be sent home without pay if they are working in an unsafe manner. Unsafe workers endanger not only themselves but those around them.

Contractor Personal Protective Equipment in Work Zones/Work Zone Apparel Visibility

Kirk Berg says there is an issue with WSDOT workers wearing required reflective apparel working side by side contracted workers who are not. Kirk feels that contractors, WSDOT and industry should be on the same page in regard to personal safety equipment. WSDOT can require that any work done within our right of way must conform to our standards. Now is a good time to introduce this concept with the current emphasis on safety. A Code of Federal Regulations regarding safety apparel is in the comment stage, incident response personnel and law enforcement will be affected as well as maintenance and construction workers.

Dave Hamacher compiled work zone apparel standards from Washington State Department of Labor and Industries, Federal Highway Administration, American National Standards Institute and WSDOT. Currently WSDOT’s specifications say contractors must wear high visibility apparel if exposed to traffic, but this may not be detailed enough. The *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices* clearly defines a work zone; WSDOT specs could be written to say “within state right of way, all workers wear Class 2 apparel in a work zone.” **Chris and Kevin will be responsible for taking this idea to the executive level, work zone members are encouraged to take this back to the regions for feedback.**

Chris Christopher asked the task force if they would be willing to back a hard hat only policy, with soft caps no longer being allowed. No one voted to back this policy. Although many felt it was a great idea, there are times that a hard hat doesn’t make sense. Discussion highlighted that the regions differ slightly from one another on hard hat guidelines. Kathleen said that Wilder Construction has a 100% hard hat policy, a 100% eye protection policy, and a 100% reflective vest policy anytime an employee is outside his or her vehicle.

Work Zone Safety Task Force Subcommittees

Traffic Control Oversight Subcommittee – Dave Hamacher reported that Washington State has previously used two traffic control supervisor (TCS) training providers, Evergreen and Northwest Laborers. A couple of months ago at the Traffic Control Oversight Committee meeting, the American Traffic Safety Services Association was welcomed as the third TCS training provider.

Safety/New Products Subcommittee – Marty Weed talked about National Cooperative Highway Research Program (NCHRP) Report 553 which is a supplement to NCHRP report 350. The object of the supplemental report is to develop nonproprietary, crashworthy work zone traffic control devices constructed of readily available materials. Guidance is contained in NCHRP Report 350 and 553, which have been formally adopted by the Federal Highway Administration. Marty also had a lightweight solar flashing beacon that is currently being tested in a couple locations. Phil Fordyce voiced concern over the solar power issue since some of their solar powered beacons failed last winter when it rained for over 30 days. Frank said that this beacon is being looked at in respect to a work zone setting, and not for long term usage.

Technical Subcommittee – Frank explained that Dave Hamacher has joined this subcommittee as a safety representative; high visibility apparel was one of the issues at the last meeting. The clear zone vs. safety zone issue has been resolved, work zone clear zone is the new title, and the *Design Manual* will reflect this change. Other topics the subcommittee covered included the new work zone federal policy, and traffic control for litter crews on state routes. Fifteen commonly requested typical traffic control plans from the *Work Zone Traffic Control Guidelines* (M54-44) have been made available on the HQ Design web page in an effort to improve consistency in contract plans. This provides designers access to CADD (Computer Aided Design and Drafting) files instead of having to redrawn them. The M54-44 will have minor revisions published electronically in the fall.

Federal Highways Administration (FHWA)

Cathy Nicholas did field reviews on nine projects to look at the pavement marking removal process, hydro-blasting is being used more often and has begun to be written into project plans. A statewide specification for pavement removal is being written, a final report will be presented at the WZSTF September meeting. The Work Zone Self Assessment is a tool used by FHWA to help states evaluate their work zone practices on an annual basis. Frank Newboles worked with Cathy to evaluate WSDOT. Scores have risen in almost all categories primarily due to work that is being done to meet the Federal Work Zone Final Rule. The area needing the most improvement is the Program Evaluation category. The *Design Manual* will be updated to reflect the new rule changes. Projects already under way when the new rule becomes effective October 2007 can apply for exception status.

Automated Flagger Assistance Devices (AFAD)

Ted Trepanier told the task force that Olympic Region has used these devices for a couple of seasons and has given great feedback on them. Ted's asked that if all the regions think AFADs are a good solution to not having a flagger on the road, why aren't more of the devices being written into projects and being used? They are applicable to mobile or short duration work zones as well since they are easy to transport and set up. After discussion, Ted agreed to pursue purchasing two more devices to be used by the regions this year and to push to include AFADs in contracts next season.

Coordinated WSDOT and Department of Labor and Industries meeting

Since the Washington State Department of Labor and Industries (L&I) is now serving an advisory role and is no longer an active part of each WZSTF meeting, Frank sees a disconnect in communication between WSDOT and L&I. Frank feels that ongoing communication at quarterly meetings he has initiated between the two agencies might alleviate confusion over issues such as flagging and conflicting WACs.

Next Meeting

The Work Zone Safety Task Force will meet September 20, from 9:00 am – 3:00 pm at Southwest Region.